

EXCAVATION OF A ROCK SHELTER AT GORGORA, LAKE TANA, ETHIOPIA.

By COLONEL F. MOYSEY.

Gorgora is an ex-Italian military station situated on the northern shore of Lake Tana, 12° 15' N. by 37° 20' E.

The lake has obviously receded and on this northern shore there is a large area of flat land extending for many miles towards Gondar.

Out of this alluvial plain rise here and there conical-shaped hills of volcanic rock which once were islands in a larger lake. About three miles from the lake one of these hills rises abruptly from the surrounding plain to a height of 300 feet and has a rock shelter. The shelter is most inaccessible, being only approached from one direction and that after a steep climb of 150 feet.

From a small platform outside the shelter the ground drops steeply to another platform of soil and then by a precipice to the base of the hill. During the rainy season a stream runs at the base of the hill.

The excavation, which was carried out with the help of two Ethiopian soldiers, was not accomplished without minor difficulties, the chief of which were heavy rain and very angry bees who had their nests in the rock above the shelter.

Added interest was given to the work by the discovery of an unexploded bomb hidden in the trench at the 9 feet level, placed there by a local humourist who perhaps objected to our activities.

The shelter is 15 feet long with a maximum width of 8 feet between the rock walls. For purposes of reference, areas excavated were given capital letters and artefacts found in these areas were marked with the area letter and the depth in feet.

"A" was an exploratory trench 8 feet by 4 feet dug across the entrance to a depth of 3 feet.

"B" was an area 8 feet by 4 feet which included area "A" and was excavated to a depth of 9 feet.

"C" was a small platform outside the shelter which proved to be only 3 feet deep before rock was encountered.

"D" the excavation of area "B" beyond 9 feet became impossible owing to the narrowing of the rock walls. An area from "B" to the back of the cave was, therefore, attacked. On reaching the 9 feet level both areas "B" and "D" were excavated together to a depth of 12 feet. At 12 feet the area "BD" was only 15 inches wide between the rock walls and further work was abandoned.

Actually there was no difference in the soil or in the implements found in each area.

Black soil rich in humus was found from the surface to a depth of 4 feet.

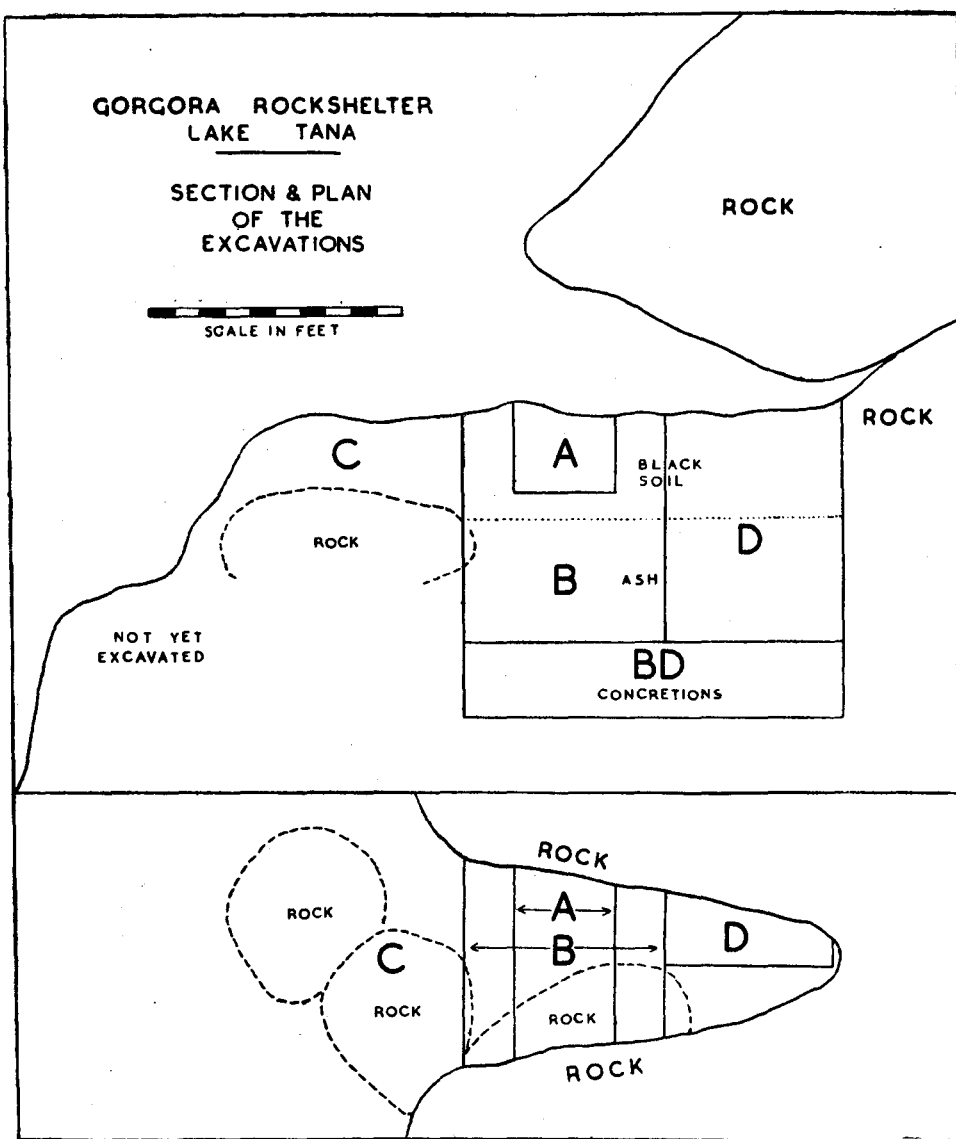


Fig. 1.

From the 4 feet level downwards the soil was a grey volcanic ash. At the 9 feet level concretions appeared and these increased until at the 12 feet level they occupied the whole trench.

Implements were found within 2 inches of the surface and continued throughout all levels. There were no sterile layers. Pottery was found to a depth of 4 feet.

The excavation is not quite complete, there is a small area within the shelter and a platform outside which I hope will provide further material for study at the Coryndon Museum, Nairobi.

It is not my purpose to discuss the results of the work or to describe the implements found, for this is in the able hands of Dr. Leakey.